

ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT Curtis School (School District Offices)

Originally one of the Town's first elementary schools, it was constructed in 1896 and is approximately 5,000 sf. in area (including the garage). Building plans were not available for this building and building measurements were not taken, thus this figure is an approximate figure. The building has had a number of various occupants including the Police department and adult education classrooms. The building now houses the school district offices.



Exterior Envelope (foundation, walls, windows, doors, roof)

Foundation: Stone foundation.

Exterior wall: Wood framing with plywood sheathing and a combination of vinyl siding (on three sides) and cedar wood shakes (on rear and garage). By viewing the rear façade of the building which has the wood shakes, the original building appears to have had Greek pilasters (wood) and architectural brackets at the soffit. The architectural details were apparently removed when the building was re-sided with vinyl. building appears to have painted wood cornice, trim and columns.

Windows: Original double hung, single-pane, wood windows with mill finish aluminum storm sash and screens fastened to the exterior of most windows, while some windows did not have the storm sash attached.

Windows into the basement reportedly leak.

Doors: The main entry doors are insulated metal doors, while the other doors around the building are wood.



Roof: Asphalt shingle with vinyl gutters and soffits (3 sides)

General items of concern and observations are as follows:

1. Asphalt shingles were noted in several locations around the chimneys to be lifting and in one particular area on the front side of the building an entire section of shingles (3' x 4') was sliding off of the roof, exposing the wood substrate to the elements. We recommend that this be addressed immediately to prevent leaks into the building and additional damage.
2. Wood shakes at the rear of the building are severely weathered and brittle and should be replaced.
3. Vinyl siding and storm windows were installed poorly. Some components missing, areas not fastened properly, inconsistent method of installation.
4. Remaining portions of original wood trim exhibit peeling paint and deteriorating wood.
5. All the wood doors around the building, including the garage overhead wood door are deteriorating at the base. These should all be replaced.
6. Concrete stairs are cracking and do not have a railing. Recommend replacement.

Interior (flooring, walls, doors, built-ins and equipment, ceiling)

Overall the building has been maintained very well. Comments and observations are as follows:

Flooring

Floor is wood construction and a combination of VAT tile and carpeting. VAT tile appears to be mostly in good condition. The carpeting is heavily worn and duct taped at the seams.



Walls and Doors

Walls are wood framed with a combination of plaster lathe and gypsum board. Original walls have wood beadboard wainscot, some new walls mostly have false/simulated wood paneling. Doors are of wood construction in various levels of quality and condition. All should be replaced.

Concrete floor in basement is cracked and very uneven.

Ceiling

Original ceilings are tin decorated panels, but most of these have been covered by suspended acoustical ceiling tile. The basement level has some areas where the ceiling height is 6' above finish floor.



Space Use

Since the building is currently not being used as a school, a full evaluation on space use could not be performed. Our comments as they would pertain to future use as a school are as follows:

1. The building does not have a gym, art, music, kitchen, cafeteria, or library space. Due to the limited size of the building and the inability to use the lower level, the building does not lend itself to being used for school use.

Handicap Accessibility

Requirements for handicap accessibility were non-existent in 1896 when this school was built. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted into law by the Federal Government to provide civil rights protections and nondiscrimination on the basis of disability. Since 1990, the original regulations have been updated and new requirements and clarifications have been added. In addition, the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts has developed their own regulations (521 CMR Architectural Access Board) that are in many instances more stringent than the ADA. Regulations are updated and added almost every year. Based on these regulations, we have found the following items to be in noncompliance or not accessible to the disabled:

1. Parking spaces not properly marked, lack aisle space, lack sign
2. Entry (steps into the building)
3. Basement level, main level, (no elevator or lift)
4. Doors have knobs except for the two exterior main entry doors.
5. Lack of room signage
6. Toilet rooms are not accessible. The following items are not in compliance:
 - a. Lavatories
 - b. Toilets and urinal
 - c. Grab bars
 - d. Clear space adjacent to doors
 - e. Clear turning space

Health and Life Safety

There are a number of issues affecting the health, welfare, and safety of staff and users of the building. From a building environment standpoint we have observed the following:

1. The entire below-grade level of the building would not be acceptable for classroom use (by current Life Safety codes) as the sill height of the windows is above the maximum allowed (3'-6").
2. Handrails (no extensions) do not comply.
3. Floor to ceiling height (head clearance) at stairs is 5 ft, well below the 7'6" minimum.
4. The basement level has some areas where the ceiling height is 6' above finish floor. This is not compliant with current code.
5. Building is entirely wood construction with no sprinkler system installed.
6. Exit corridor in basement narrows to 30" at rear exit. Not in compliance with current code.



7. Although the building's fire alarm system appears to have been recently upgraded, the egress path at the rear of the main level requires the occupant to step 1 ft up onto a threshold, over exposed fin-tube radiation, and onto a wood platform where one now must travel down non-compliant stairs, through piles of stored items and out the garage door. This path of egress is a safety concern and is not compliant with current codes.
8. Lavatory at men's toilet room is located outside of the room. This does not meet current code.

Recommendation:

Although the building appears to be generally in sound condition, renovations and modifications made to the building have not increased the value of the building, nor have they given reverence to the architectural qualities or historical heritage of the building. In addition, the modifications made, exterior and interior, were not consistently instituted; for example, only three sides of the building have vinyl siding, only some of the windows had the storm sash attached, only two of the doors were replaced, only some of the rooms have suspended acoustical ceiling tile, some of the rooms have wood paneling, others do not.

Our recommendation for this building is to determine how important of a building this is to the school district and the town. If it is deemed important because of its historical significance, our recommendation would be to make every effort to restore the building's architectural qualities in a way that is respectful to the original design while modifying it to meet the current codes and the needs of the occupants using quality materials and workmanship.